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SITUATION REGARDING THE PROMOTION, FULL REALIZATION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

letter dated 26 July 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the fifty-first session of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit to you annexed herewith* the information on the observance and protection of the rights of youth in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the above-mentioned information as an official document of the fifty-first session of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights under item 11 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed): M.-A. Mammedov
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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* The annex is reproduced in Russian, as received, and in English only.

Annex

INFORMATION ON RESPECT FOR AND PROTECTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The concept of human rights is applied in new contexts every day. Young people constitute one of the most vulnerable social groups.

According to the latest population census, children and young people make up 60 per cent of the population of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Since young people account for the major proportion of the population, have historically been important for the life of Azerbaijan and are traditionally active, President G. Aliev considers it essential to address youth issues at State policy level. As a result of this approach, the Ministry of Youth and Sport - a central State body for implementing youth and sport policy - was set up by presidential decree on 26 July 1994. The Ministry's responsibilities regarding youth include all-round development, organization, protection of rights, productive organization of free time and promotion of participation in the socio-economic reforms under way in the Republic and the construction of an independent, just and democratic State.

Over the past five years, the Ministry has consistently and effectively fulfilled the obligations conferred on it. In 1996 and 1999, the independent Republic of Azerbaijan's first and second youth forums were held. With the participation of the leader of the Republic and heads of other interested departments, the Ministry successfully conducted wide-ranging discussion of the tasks ahead and ways of, and prospects for fulfilling them. Youth Day is now celebrated every year on 2 February; on this day, the public's attention is focused on tackling youth issues. A "Young Family" programme has been approved, by the Head of State and local application is under way.

Programmes for rehabilitating young people demobilized from the army and encouraging talented young people are in preparation. It is intended to begin implementing them in the year 2000.

A number of important projects have been drawn up by youth organizations and submitted to the Ministry: a health project (Society for International Cooperation among the Disabled), an anti-smoking campaign (Medical Students' Association) and others.

The measures taken by the Ministry cover all areas of the Republic except for the 20 per cent of its territory occupied by Armenia. The work of local youth and sport administrations and of district branches of youth organizations embraces representatives of young people regardless of national origin or religious affiliation.

The Ministry pays great attention to youth organizations such as Yashlek, a Tatar youth centre, and Veten, a youth association for the Meskhetian Turk community, which represent ethnic minorities. Both organizations are members of the Ministry Board's Social Council and of the National Assembly of Youth Organizations. For example, two representatives of Yashlek were sent to Kazan to participate in the World Tatar Youth Congress held from 1 to 4 July this year..

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted in 1995, guarantees the protection of citizens' rights, including young people's rights.

That there are, on the whole, no problems relating to ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan, that the State treats all citizens without ethnic discrimination and that national minorities are intermingled with the Azerbaijani Turks who make up 80 per cent of the population, plus the existence of mixed marriages, the common fight against enemies and the coincidence of national customs, are all factors that make for a promising future. It is a terrible fact that, with the politico-military support of Russia and Armenia, ethnic Armenians living in the territory of Nagorny-Karabakh have occupied even populated areas far beyond the borders of Nagorny-Karabakh and made refugees of Azerbaijani Turks and Kurds more than six years ago.

The activity of 81 children's and youth organizations and the fact that they have joined together in a public confederative structure - the National Assembly of Youth Organizations - are creating new possibilities for protecting the rights of that social group, making its members' voices heard and realizing their ideas and hopes.

Youth organizations play an active part in the forum for non-governmental organizations created in June 1999. It should be noted that the President and the Vice-President of the forum are representatives of young people. The active role played by young people in public and

political life facilitates their promotion to responsible State posts. This confirms once again the State's faith in the younger generation. The admission of the National Assembly to the European Youth Forum and the fact that, in the popular mass media, most journalists are young enable young people's voices to be heard both locally and internationally.

All this underlines once again the fact that our country's leaders will continue to take a keen interest in the situation of young people.